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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000383

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STATE PASS DOE FOR DAS JBRODMAN AND CGAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS AND SRENENDER
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ
STATE FOR DS/IP/AF, AF/EX, DS/IP/OPO, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/ITA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/14/2016

TAGS: EPET PGOV ASEC PTER CASC NI

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: HOSTAGE-TAKING, SITREP # 24

REF: LAGOS 376

Classified By: Acting Political/Economic Chief Shannon Ross
for reasons 1.4 (D/E).

Summary

¶1. (C) Conoff received a phone call from the hostage takers, and had a highly scripted exchange with Amcit Cody Oswalt. Ijaw youth leaders have been meeting in Warri since yesterday, and one of them tells us he expects a release of the hostages tomorrow night. There were no additional attacks on oil installations, but Shell reports noticeable shortages of kerosene and diesel in the Delta region as a result of curtailment of deliveries there by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). End summary.

Hostage Welfare Update

¶2. (C) Conoff received another phone call from the hostage takers tonight at approximately 1930 hours, and again spoke to AmCit Cody Oswalt. The hostage taker's tone was more threatening than in the previous conversation. He asked for the USG and HMG to place pressure on the GON to resolve the hostage issue. Oswalt's remarks to Conoff were significantly more scripted than the previous conversation. Oswalt stated he has been separated from the other hostages, but we cannot independently verify this. We have no confirmation regarding the status of the other hostages.

¶3. (C) Other sources continue to assure us the hostages are in good condition and in the same place. Family letters were delivered to Judy Asuni, who hopes to have them sent to the hostages tomorrow morning.

¶4. (C) Willbros's Houston office feels released Amcit hostage Macon Hawkins is not ready to make a public appeal for the release of the remaining hostages, but will continue to work with him.

Hostage Negotiations

¶ 15. (C) A meeting of Ijaw youth leaders concluded today with a press briefing and publication of a communique, which recognized the urgency of development issues in the Delta region, and the need for the hostages to be released rapidly.

¶ 16. (C) Dr. Sofiri Peterside, a Port Harcourt-based academic who helps run the city's American Corner outreach facility, attended the meeting and claimed Bello Oboko was arranging a release for tomorrow night. However, no other sources corroborate this information.

¶ 17. (C) Several sources indicate concern over next week's national census has placed additional pressure on the kidnappers to release the hostages. The GON has threatened not to count Ijaws if hostages are still being held in their communities, and if the area is too dangerous for enumerators. A communique released by Ijaw elders who met in Yenagoa last week stressed the importance of the census to the Ijaw ethnic group.

Energy Update

¶ 18. (C) Shell reports noticeable shortages of kerosene and diesel fuel due to NNPC restriction on delivery to the Delta region. Minister of State for Petroleum Resources Daukoru, in a statement to the international press, revised upwards a previous estimate of shut-in production from 450,000 barrels

LAGOS 00000383 002 OF 002

per day (BPD) to 556,000 bpd. This change does not reflect any new shut-in production, but rather is an admission past estimates were low. (Note: Based on private conversations with Shell, Mission has been reporting 550,000 bpd lost production for several weeks. End note)

Delta Working Group Review

¶ 19. (C) The Delta Working Group (DWG) met March 14 to share information on latest developments in the Delta. An oil company representative from Exxon Mobil said Comrade Owei, a leader of the Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw Ethnic Nationalities in the Niger Delta (MOSIEND), was actively recruiting Ibibio and Efik peoples in the Akwa Ibom area to join the Ijaw cause. He claimed Owei was behind the letters threatening action against Exxon Mobil and the protests at the Qua Iboe Terminal over the weekend. Other oil company representatives said oil worker unions PENGASSAN and NUPENG were threatening to pull out of the Delta if security measures were not strengthened. PENGASSAN leaders denied the claim and said rumors may have been started within a local chapter. The police liaison to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) told the working group that "top brass" in the Joint Task Force, Navy, and Mobile Police are involved with bunkering and protection rackets in the Delta, and the EFCC plans to take a more pro-active role in eliminating corruption from the sensitive region.

Military Update

¶ 19. (C) There are no significant updates.

Media Update

¶ 10. (SBU) The Vanguard reported U.S. diplomats were

lobbying the Delta State Government for the release of the hostages.

Consular Update

¶11. (C) There have been no reports of additional attacks on AmCits. One mission Conoff and one FEST member are in Warri monitoring negotiations and prepared to assist with repatriation. The UK also has a consular officer in Warri to monitor negotiations and assist with repatriation. The head of Shell Security is on standby for repatriation assistance.
HOWE